



NEWS

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Traffic Safety Agencies Beefed Up For the Holiday

(Sacramento) Memorial Day weekend traditionally marks the beginning of summer and the end of the school year. Thousands of Californians will enjoy the great outdoors with picnics and BBQs. Before the celebration begins, the California Highway Patrol (CHP), the State Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), Caltrans, Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) and local law enforcement agencies want to remind you to plan ahead, have a designated driver, wear your seat belt and don't speed.

"Once the BBQ is over, you still have to get home safely. The CHP will have up to 80 percent of our officers out on the road looking for those who don't comply with the rules of the road," stated CHP Commissioner Mike Brown. Last Memorial Day weekend 20 people were killed on roadways within CHP jurisdiction; down significantly from the previous year's total of 33. "We can still do better," said Commissioner Brown.

OTS is coordinating California law enforcement's 2007 "Click It or Ticket" campaign. "We have funded overtime to put extra police and CHP officers on the road to look for people not wearing their seat belt during this campaign," said OTS Director Christopher J. Murphy. Fifty percent of the people killed on the roadways during Memorial Day weekend were not wearing their seat belts.

The officers will also be on the lookout for the tell-tale signs of an impaired driver. "This year we are asking the public to join us in our efforts to rid the roadways of drunk drivers," noted Caltrans Director Will Kempton.

Signs at Caltrans statewide network of public rest stops urge people to report drunk drivers by calling 9-1-1. When calling to report someone suspected of driving under the influence, try to provide as much of the following information as possible: description of the vehicle, its location and direction of travel.

Last year CHP officers alone arrested 1,639 drivers for DUI during the Memorial Day weekend. That is a 6.5 percent increase over the previous year.

This is also the time of year when teenagers hit the road to the beach, the mountains or other fun spots. “Underage drinking by inexperienced drivers is a deadly combination,” said ABC Director Steve Hardy. “We will have extra ABC agents working this weekend to prevent the sale of alcohol to underage or intoxicated people.”

“This is the time of year when thousands of families pack up their vehicles and head out on vacation. Do your part to ensure your trip ends up in your scrapbook, not our logbook,” said West Sacramento Police Chief Dan Drummond.

“This weekend may be no picnic for our folks. They’ll be working, so give them a break and obey the traffic laws,” stated Elk Grove Police Chief Bob Simmons.

“The summer driving season may be busy, but it doesn’t have to be bloody. Keep yourself and your family safe. Buckle up, watch your speed and never drink and drive,” said DMV Deputy Director Mimi Khan.

The holiday weekend is a Maximum Enforcement Period (MEP) for the CHP. All available officers will be on duty from 6 p.m. on Friday, May 25 through midnight on Monday, May 28.

The Memorial Day MEP is also an Operation CARE (Combined Accident Reduction Effort) holiday. Operation CARE is a joint program of the nation’s highway patrols that places special safety emphasis on interstate highways during holiday periods. CARE highways in California include Interstates 80, 40, 15 (San Bernardino to the Nevada border) and 5 (Bakersfield north to the Oregon line).

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